

(Demo) Civilian Conservation Corps



FWSCCC-0064

Narrative report for August 1936
Sod House BF-2, Malheur Migratory Waterfowl Refuge

In submitting the following report, covering the activities of building construction on the Malheur Lake Refuge during the month of August, I wish to emphasize, first of all, my appreciation for your own efforts in assisting to get desirable skilled craftsmen, which are so essential for the proper execution of the mechanical work involved.

Veteran builders consider the problem of selecting proper types of men for their respective places as one of the most important of their tasks, and certainly, you should be commended for the manner in which you have handled this situation which is so acute because of the peculiar conditions of this region.

SMALL BUT CAPABLE

Although the group of boys, which is employed on the buildings project, is comparatively small when considered from the standpoint of the size of the job, additional skilled men, also acting as foremen, furnish new life, and the din and tempo of activities have been perceptibly increased.

Twenty-five boys, spread out over a project the size of our headquarters buildings job, form a rather thin layer at the best. Still, with the able supervision of the numerous skilled men, the maximum degree of efficiency has been secured; a degree which probably could not be obtained in any other way.

STATUS OF AFFAIRS

With the Residence, Office, and Service buildings under roof, and the Barn building quickly approaching the same status, we are getting the majority of the buildings, not only enclosed, but gradually nearing the state of completion.

The Office building has been trimmed, and is ready for the hanging of doors; wardrobes, coat-closets, and shelving all in place. And with another coat of paint on the interior walls, the erection of electrical fixtures will be in order.

The interior trimming for the Residence building has been partially completed. A considerable amount of the Celotex insulation has been applied to the ceilings, and some painting has been done on the plastered walls.

The exterior painting on three of the major buildings has been practically accomplished. The cement floor and approaches for the Service building have been finished this month, and back-filling for the concrete work on the Barn floor has also been completed.

NEW BLOOD AND NEW WORK

We have placed one of our capable ~~carpenters~~ carpenter mechanics in charge of the Clerk's Cabin work, and are glad to report that

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on the first of September, masons will be laying stone on the exterior masonry walls of this building.

A considerable portion of the plumbing has been roughed-in on this building, and the basement sub-grade has been leveled, ready for the concrete pouring of the floor.

Practically all of the stone, needed for the masonry walls of this building, is either on the building site or at the quarry, ready to be hauled as it is needed.

LANDSCAPING

With the rhythmic swinging of the new dragline boom, excavating for the artificial lake at the entrance gate, soil is being made available for sub-grading at the building site. And with the constant drone of the trucks, hauling dirt for the sub-fill, the scars of building activities about the project are fast being healed, and the base laid for the ultimate surfacing with top soil for landscaping purposes.

THE WHEREWITHAL

Materials for the various building projects are arriving daily, and it is indeed encouraging to have on hand the necessary items before they are actually needed. To have such a stock of material on hand, is a great help to one when planning the procedure of the work. It also adds that essential "something" to the morale of the skilled men, and to the interest of the boys who work on such projects.

THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER

Since we realize that after this next month we may expect a little more interference to our building activities by weather conditions, every effort will be directed toward cleaning up all work that would be easily affected, and also toward planning our work and providing equipment to meet the coming severer weather, in order that we may continue all necessary work with a good measure of efficiency, irrespective of weather conditions.

The new drag line was walked and towed from Hanley Lane, some 27 miles from camp and the first bridge it encountered, which was 18 feet long, was flanked with 8 " x 12" planks the length of the bridge to help support the weight of this machine. When it was fully on, the bridge gave way but the drag line continued on across. There were light similar bridges to cross on the road, therefore, it was necessary to take the fences down and go through the hay fields to reach Sod House camp. The damaged bridge was reconstructed the same day by 3 SCC boys and a foreman. The new drag line being used to excavate a duck pond, the dirt being hauled to make the fill around the headquarters building.

Two cattle guards at the entrance to the building site have been constructed and two others partly constructed. The two at the entrance are sixteen feet across the width of the road and 11' 9" with the road. First the earth and rock is excavated to a depth of 30" x 18' x 14' then a set of forms are put in which are filled with concrete to form a base or four resting sills for the 4" x 15' boiler pipe (Boiler flues) which is spaced 4" apart to form the tread for the cars.

The ducks and geese are coming in fast and two boys are working with the Biologist banding ducks.

The earth work on the dyke should be finished sometime in September.

The transportation of post, lumber, tile, brick, hardware, and other material continues, 57 man days for the month of August being consumed. 15,000 posts have been delivered on the job.

We are posting the Refuge boundary as the fence is constructed.

To date we have 1.25 miles of woven wire fence around the headquarters site. The bottom of this wire is 3" under the ground, to prevent rabbits from getting through into the site, and two barbed wire on top. Three miles of barbed wire fence is constructed with juniper post and three willow stays in between. Ten miles of barbed wire strung on cedar post, with 3 wire stays between each post, which are 16' 8" apart.

We have to travel about 15 miles out to the fence job each morning, returning in the evening. A cold lunch is served to the boys at noon.

One of the fence crew had dug 17 post holes near the dyke and close to the Waddell place when Mrs. Waddell came from the house and asked the boys not to dig any more post holes on her property; the holes were filled up as the fence foreman wasn't sure just what he should do in such a situation and on the following morning work on the same holes was resumed with the result that. Although Mrs. Waddell again tried to stop the boys, she admitted she could not afford to serve an injunction. In these two and subsequent encounters, Mrs. Waddell has been friendly.

A few days later after one of the fence crews had returned to camp in the afternoon, 32 posts, which had been set and tamped down, were dug up and the holes filled with rocks and dirt. These 32 posts holes were redug and posts set, wire strung and stays put in the next day. Signs warning persons against tampering and distroying Government property, were posted on this particular area, and to date no more interference has been experianced.

I am the mechanic here at Camp Sod House and I have seventeen trucks and three big caterpillar Tractors and a new Cletrac Tractor that has a diesel engine to look after and only have one helper and he is a CCC boy and so far we have been able to keep them all running almost every day. I feel quite proud to be able to make such a statement as most of the trucks were in bad condition when they were brought here. I also have official cars to do repairs on once in awhile.

I think we have a very nice camp site here and we also have many different kinds of beautiful birds. Some of them are getting so tame that they come right up in the back of the mess hall to pick up food. We are able to get very close to them and I feel that the Government has done a wonderful thing in making a bird reservation here as it is a very good place for one.

At the end of this month you can notice a big change around the headquarters buildings. The new Dodge dump trucks have been hauling fill in dirt for the last week and it brought the buildings closer to the ground.

The new Osgood Dragline is making a duck pond along the road. So far there is not much water in the pond but next spring it will be full.

The sea gulls are getting tamer all the time. They come right up to the boys after mess and they feed them. They always seem to know what time mess is.

The chipmonks around camp come right in the tent and eat peanuts you leave for them.

I've noticed a number of ducks and Geese in big bands flying over camp within the last week.

The longer I stay in this country the better I like it.

It gives a fellow a chance to learn things that are different from most any other part of the country.

Our heavy equipment this month has made their best showing so far this season. On August 24th, a new dragline shovel was put in operation at this camp excavating ford duck pond at entrance of Refuge,

excavated material was hauled by five dump trucks, a distance of $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to fill around Headquarters building. In six days operation, 1485 loads of $1\frac{3}{4}$ yards per load were excavated and hauled. Dirt was leveled off after being dumped with a bulldozer.

With three tractors on dyke and excellent showing was made, 34,600 yards was moved into place.

During the month of August I have been busy as acting foreman over a crew of six CCC enrollees who, I am convinced, are the six best boys in camp. We were chosen as setting crew on the regular refuge fencing project and most of our days this month were spent acting in this capacity.

After the post hole crew has finished digging a section of post holes, it is the duty of the setting crew to follow up and put in the fence posts. These posts must be in perfect alignment and firmly set in the ground. Two most important essentials of a well constructed fence, and, objective that can only be gained through careful sighting and hard tamping.

Before we were assigned to the setting detail, the record high of one hundred and thirty posts set by ten men was made in another camp. In answer to a request from our Chief Foreman for a half mile of posts a day, one hundred and sixty posts, my boys due to hard work and a praiseworthy willingness to cooperate answered him with a daily average for the month of two hundred and forty posts or three quarters of a mile. On one six hour day under especially favorable conditions they made a new record of three hundred and eight posts set by six men.

To break the monotony of setting posts day after day, we were fortunate enough to have been the crew used in unloading carload lots of posts, lumber and other materials needed on the refuge. As this necessitated frequent early morning trips to Burns, Oregon, about thirty five miles away, and as a great part of this distance was through the refuge where large numbers of wildfowl could be seen, news of a car to unload was greeted with enthusiasm.

On these trips we saw countless numbers of waterfowl including gloss ibis, blue herons, night herons, bitterns, many species of shorebirds and coots all grouped together on one small neck of the Malheur Lake. As we drove along the road small bands of ducks arose from every pond and with flashing wings joined their fellows ~~circled~~ ^{circled} high above us in bands of

fiftys and hundreds. The sight of great wedges of Canada Geese flying with lazy wing beats from nearby fields to the mid-day haven of the lake always thrilled us.

All in all, due to the joy of accomplishment and the glory of our surroundings, we have enjoyed the past month.

During the month of August I have been in charge of the stretching crew on our fence project. On August 12 we finished stretching wire on the fence around the headquarters buildings at Malheur Lake. This was a rather difficult job as the ground was very uneven and some of the stretches were only ten rods in length in order to make the woven wire fit the contour of ground.

The balance of the month was spent on the Refuge boundary fence on Malheur Lake. We stretched a total of seven miles which made an average of $\frac{1}{2}$ mile a day. This also included putting in the twisted wire stays. The most difficult part of the job has been unreeling the barb wire. At first we used a reel that was made to accommodate three spools of wire on a horizontal shaft. This was very unsatisfactory as the wire would jump off the spools and become entangled. We are now using a reel that holds five spools of wire which are set on individual vertical shafts with guides for each wire and is used on the rear end of a truck. This has proved very satisfactory as only one man is needed to watch the reel and we are able to unroll the wire in one third the time it formerly took.

There has been more or less competition among the different crews on the fencing job which has speeded up the work and is partly responsible for the good record we have made this month. The enrollees are very much interested and satisfied in their job and deserve a lot of credit for their splendid work and cooperation.

We made two trips to the Malheur National Forest after brace poles for the fence. We cut the poles at Ewing spring which is eighty miles from Sod House camp and requires two days. This trip has always been a source of pleasure for the boys as they have lot of fun camping out. The biggest problem has been choosing the boys for the trip as everyone wants to go. We are very fortunate in having such a willing group of boys who are always ready to do their part without complaining even though the going is hard at times.

For the past month I have been working on the fence construction. I have charge of from 10 to 12 CCC boys, our duty is to dig the post holes ahead of the post setting crew. We have a truck with which we haul posts and put them into the holes so that everything will be in readiness for the post setters. We have 50 feet stakes set ahead of us at which posts go, these have already been set by the surveying crew. As the posts must be 16 feet 8 inches apart it is our job also to set two stakes in line, and also evenly spaced between these 50 feet stakes.

At each corner we put posts two feet on each side of the land mark. The next post on each side is 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet apart for the braces. Our post holes are 30 inches in depth, and careful watch must be kept to see that, in their hurry to see how many post holes they can do in the day, they might leave one before it is deep enough. If this is done the post would not be as solid and also it would be taller than the others.

We stake, dig holes, and put posts in from one-half to three-quarters of a mile a day. The dirt we dig into is not the same from day to day, sometimes it is easy to dig a hole and at other times very hard. At times we go across fields and at other times through sage brush.

As we leave mile after mile behind us we are glad that we can partake in the construction of a fence around such a wonderful refuge for waterfowl, other birds, and animals.

Already the geese and ducks can be seen flying, feeding and resting in bands of hundreds. Later, when the migration begins, it will be the resting and feeding place of thousands and thousands of these wonderful birds.



Covering the agricultural tile, used as sewage disposal field, with cinders ready for the dirt fill. These cinders are of volcanic origin and very porous.



Putting in the calking cement around the windows.



Boys cutting rock for the headquarters building. These rock are quarried and hauled some 20 miles to the building site.



Headquarters barn under construction.



Mixing concrete for the clerks' cabin



Pouring concrete for the basement of the clerks' cabin.



Putting large lava rock onto a dolly to move
from stock pile to be used on porch steps.



Pouring concrete for the foundation of the clerks' cabin.



Filling in around the foundation of the clerks' cabin. Tractor operated with CCC boys only.



Filling in around the cement reservoir.

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Drilling post holes in the
rock ready to build fence
around the headquarters site
the old fence is off the
line and is now removed.



Digging post holes ready for
fence about headquarters.



Putting up the woven wire
about headquarters site.



Putting in the forms for
the cattle guard to the
entrance of the headquarters
site.



Putting in the wire stay in
the fence around the lake.



Unloading post which are hauled
from 7 to 37 miles, these are
cedar posts and have to be un-
loaded from the cars.



Digging post holes for
the fence around the
boundary of the Refuge.



Cats pushing dirt up
making the dike around
the lake.



A close up view of cat
pushing up the dirt to
form the dyke.



Drag line in operation making duck pond. The earth is used for fill at the headquarters building.



Drag line loading trucks. As above



Duck pond created by the dragline.

They live in operation
making such good. The
area is used for till
of the landscape
building



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